

STATEMENT OF GARY L. EDWARDS
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**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING
AND TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT**

**REGARDING THE PROGRESS ON INFORMATION SHARING
FOR HOMELAND SECURITY**

JULY 20, 2005

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice-Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Gary Edwards and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the National Native American Law Enforcement Association ("NNALEA"). I am honored and pleased to appear before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment to discuss the progress of information sharing for Homeland Security. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.

Background on NNALEA

As many of you may be aware, NNALEA is a non-profit public service organization founded in 1993, which among other things, provides a media for the exchange of ideas and new techniques, and establishes networks for training, collaboration, technical assistance, information sharing and investigative assistance between federal, tribal, state and local governments and agencies and the private sector. NNALEA has conducted twelve (12) National Training Conferences across the United States, and is currently preparing for its thirteenth (13) National Training Conference to be held on November 15-17, 2005 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Homeland Security and information sharing will be hot topics at this upcoming National Training Conference. In my capacity as the CEO of NNALEA I have served on a number of advisory committees, task forces and working groups of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice.

Information Sharing for Homeland Security -- Past

The progress of information sharing for Homeland Security can best be understood by comparing today's information sharing for Homeland Security with that of the past. Prior to the formation and efforts of the Department of Homeland Security, information sharing on issues relating to the security of our Homeland were handled in "patches," wherein the federal departments, states, tribes, localities, and the private sector would largely engage in information sharing for homeland security independently or through limited coordination. There was not a "Master Weaver," so to speak, to achieve a seamless fusion of all of the "patches." The result was that in the past, although there was some information sharing, there were no comprehensive

plans, no centralized coordination, and no seamless functionality of information sharing for Homeland Security as a whole. With the formation of the Department of Homeland Security, information sharing to secure our Homeland was finally given its much needed "Master Weaver."

Information Sharing for Homeland Security -- Present

Presently, the Department of Homeland Security has placed a great focus on information sharing for Homeland Security. As Secretary Chertoff recently stated: "The ability to share information with our international, state, [tribal] and local partners, the private sector, law enforcement and first responders is absolutely critical to our success." The Department of Homeland Security has employed a national approach, engaging national organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and NNALEA, among numerous others, to work towards achieving information sharing goals such as: integration among public and private stakeholders of the roles and responsibilities for the security of our homeland; seamless functionality of information sharing; establishment of effective partnerships for information sharing; information sharing pertaining to prevention, protection, and all-hazards response and recovery; establishment of comprehensive information sharing plans; centralized coordination of information sharing; promotion of greater situational awareness; and the fusion and sharing of a richer intelligence base.

For example, NNALEA, NCAI, and a number of other partners with the support of the United States Department of Homeland Security Office for Domestic Preparedness are currently performing the Tribal Border Security Pilot Program ("TBS Pilot Program"). The TBS Pilot Program is cutting-edge and provides Indian Tribes located on or near our International Borders with the opportunity to advance their respective Tribe's ability to deal with threats or acts of terrorism, natural disasters and other national emergencies, while also advancing Indian Country and National Homeland Security. In one phase of the TBS Pilot Program a number of information gathering tools are utilized to collect information on areas vital to Homeland Security, such as: Emergency Management and Public Works; Law Enforcement, Border Security and Detention Facilities; Emergency Fire Responders; Emergency Medical Responders and Facilities; Critical Infrastructure and Environment; and Public Safety Communications and Interoperability. It is anticipated that the Department of Homeland Security may use the information from the TBS Pilot Program as an aid in assessing the "as is" environment of Homeland Security on our borders, as well as a Homeland Security capabilities, preparedness and needs assessment of the participating Tribes, among other uses.

Much recognition and many thanks should be given to the nearly forty (40) tribes who have graciously shared their information on the above areas for the TBS Pilot Program. Their participation is a testament to their vigilance for the security of our Homeland. In addition, much recognition and many thanks should be given to the United States Department of Homeland Security for its insightfulness in recognizing the important role that these border Indian Tribes play in our Homeland Security.

Information Sharing for Homeland Security -- Future

As information sharing for Homeland Security progresses into the future, the focus should continue to be upon the integration of information sharing systems between federal, state, tribal, and local governments and agencies, as well as the private sector. This integration can be achieved through the following:

- the federal government clearly defining what type of intelligence and information is needed;
- the removal of barriers, like long waits for Security Clearances;
- the empowerment of local and tribal law enforcement to collect intelligence;
- the creation of a legal structure for intelligence gathering and information sharing that law enforcement officers feel comfortable in;
- the removal of any legal impediments that prevent law enforcements' ability to gather legitimate intelligence at the state, tribal and local levels, without spying on people and all the while protecting the Constitutional Rights and Human Rights of American Citizens;
- the continued establishment of coordinated intelligence and information fusion centers;
- the development of clear "Open Interoperable Communications Information Sharing Policies" that require "two-way" information sharing between the federal departments, states, tribes, local entities and the private sector, because "top-down" information sharing is an ineffective, inefficient method that creates untimely critical information sharing;
- the development of innovative means to build and maintain personal relationships across our great Homeland -- for personal relationships are the one time-tested catalyst for information sharing; and
- the provision for funding for much needed equipment, technology, training, accreditations/certifications, personnel, pay parity and so forth, to allow governments and agencies of differing means to be able to achieve seamless information sharing for Homeland Security.

As Winston Churchill once said: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job."

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you today. I am happy to answer any questions that any of you may have.